

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
ACTIVITIES CENTER AD-HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
APRIL 8, 2026 – 6:00PM
THE HAWK – CONFERENCE CENTER

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rich at 6:07pm.

ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTIONS

Members Present: Aldred, Fantore, Gottlieb, Paymon and Rich

Members Absent: Stimson

Others Present: Acting City Manager Mondora, City Clerk Lindahl, Deputy City Clerk Hopper, Directors Aranowski, Farmer, Skrobola, Sullen-Winn and Senior Adult Supervisor Koet

General introductions were conducted with staff and community members present.

DISCUSSION ON COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Mayor Rich explained the committee's role as defined by the resolution passed by City Council on February 23, 2026. The committee is a temporary body focused specifically on design ideas and options for the new activity center facility. She emphasized that this is a working session format, not a public forum for revisiting past decisions.

The committee composition includes two Council members, one Commission on Aging member, one Parks and Recreation member, one person aged 50 and better, and one person under age 50. City administration designates staff attendance as needed for each meeting's agenda.

Mayor Rich clarified the committee's limitations: they cannot spend money, enter contracts, direct city staff or contractors, render decisions, or vote on matters. The committee operates purely in an advisory capacity, similar to City Council study sessions where consensus is observed rather than formal votes taken.

Member Fantore questioned what it meant that the committee cannot vote on matters. Mayor Rich explained this meant no formal motions, or voting procedures would be used, contrasting this with other bodies like the Commission on Aging that do conduct formal votes.

The committee is expected to expire upon award of the construction manager contract or one year from the resolution's effective date. Reports on progress and activities will be provided to City Council upon request or at the committee's conclusion.

Mayor Rich outlined the established needs for the new activities center based on previous community input: a standalone facility with a pool at reasonable temperature, space for congregate meals, a standalone kitchen (noting over 114,000 meals served last year through Meals on Wheels and

congregate meal programs), rooms for activities, and a large gymnasium for pickleball, line dancing, and exercise classes.

Member Gottlieb emphasized the facility's importance beyond physical structure, describing it as "the heart of the senior community" serving as a lifeline for many residents, including those who rely on daily meals because they cannot afford groceries. She stressed the facility's crucial role in mental and physical health for the community.

Member Fantore noted the Commission on Aging's three-year involvement in this issue and emphasized the importance of community input, thanking the council for creating this committee to gather that feedback.

REVIEW OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING SERVICES - SCOPE OF WORK

Director of Central Services Aranowski explained the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, distinguishing it from a bid process. The RFP evaluates proposals on multiple factors beyond price, including team experience, portfolio of completed projects, geographic location, and understanding of community needs.

The RFP for the Activities Center was issued in mid-January with proposals due at the end of February. Fifteen competent proposals were received, showing significant interest in the project. The evaluation team, comprised of staff from Central Services, City Manager's Office, Engineering Division, and Parks and Recreation, narrowed the field to five firms for initial interviews.

Acting City Manager Mondora noted that firms with experience in senior centers and municipal facilities scored higher in evaluations. Some firms had specific experience with meals-on-wheels kitchens, understanding the logistics of deliveries and distribution versus simple cafeterias.

The selected firm will conduct site evaluation at the Hawk campus, facility concept development, and site master planning in the initial phases. Subsequent phases would include schematic design, design development, and construction document preparation, awarded separately based on funding confirmation.

Councilmember Aldred expressed concern about the RFP's general description of activity center requirements without specific senior center focus. Staff confirmed they specifically looked for firms with senior center experience and meals-on-wheels kitchen expertise.

Director Aranowski clarified that while the facility would primarily serve seniors, they wanted flexibility for use during off-hours by other groups, making the facility future-proof and maximizing utilization.

Senior Programming Supervisor Koet expressed concern about the RFP's inclusion of a "warming kitchen" as a budgetary alternative, stating this would be inadequate for their needs.

Mayor Rich strongly opposed any warming kitchen option, stating she would not support such a proposal and noting that a \$1.5 million federal grant application had been submitted specifically for a commercial kitchen.

Discussion was held on the need for a full commercial kitchen opposed to a warming kitchen and that this should be given priority during design.

Interim Director of Special Services Farmer explained that program space decisions must be made early in the design process, as changes later would be costly. Once the program is established (pool, gym, commercial kitchen), the goal is to maintain that plan to avoid expensive change orders.

It was noted that the contract award timeline had been delayed from the original March 23rd target to April 27th due to extensive firm interest and questions requiring thorough responses. Following award, the selected firm would need 3-4 months to complete initial site evaluation and facility concept phases before bringing in a construction manager for more detailed cost estimates.

Discussion arose regarding parking requirements, with the RFP specifying approximately 180 new parking spaces. Member Gottlieb questioned whether this would be sufficient, noting difficulties finding parking during busy programs. Staff clarified this was an initial approximation to be refined by the selected architectural firm based on their expertise.

Discussion was held on accessibility of the new facility and accessibility amenities that could be considered further into this design process.

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

The committee is required to hold at least two additional meetings within 60 days of the initial orientation, that being by June 7th. Two future meetings were scheduled: April 30th and May 14th, both at 6:00PM in City Hall Council Chambers.

There was discussion about having the selected vendor attend the April 30th meeting, but staff noted this might not be feasible as the contract would not yet be in place. The vendor would more likely be available for the May 14th meeting, allowing adequate preparation time.

Member Paymon asked if there would be an update on the selected vendor at the April 30th meeting. Director Aranowski responded, confirming that staff would be able to provide background information on the firm and why they were chosen at that meeting.

Member Fantore suggested the committee meet at the Costick Center at least some of the time to facilitate user input, referencing successful listening sessions conducted by the Commission on Aging. He proposed that this committee conduct such sessions rather than the Commission on Aging doing so separately.

Mayor Rich responded that City Hall was better equipped for meetings with proper technology and microphone systems, noting the setup difficulties experienced at the current meeting location. She preferred keeping meetings at City Hall, which is only about a mile from the Costick Center, to avoid staff time required for special setups at alternative locations.

Interim Director Farmer supported holding meetings at City Hall for efficiency and cost savings, noting that the selected architectural firm would likely conduct their own public engagement sessions at various locations as part of their standard community outreach process.

Member Fantore also suggested that the committee would benefit from a sequence of events and clarity about what specific questions or design elements the Council wants the committee to address at each meeting, so that members can gather targeted feedback from their constituencies in advance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cynthia Persitz questioned how architectural firms could conduct site evaluations without a predetermined list of facility requirements and asked for clarification on whether evaluations were limited to the Hawk property or if it included other sites like the Costick Center property.

Sue Dengiz criticized the committee composition, stating some members hadn't heard previous community input about Costick Center needs. She argued the Hawk location was inappropriate due to space constraints, rolling hills requiring extensive road construction and tree removal, and advocated for considering the Costick Center site on 11 Mile Road with more available space.

Kathy Marshall emphasized the importance of accessibility for older adults and criticized the meeting location choice. She expressed concern about traffic issues on 12 Mile Road. She argued for holding meetings at the Costick Center where constituents already gather and noted upcoming challenges to senior services including Social Security cuts beginning in 2034.

Liane Kufchock questioned the fiscal responsibility of building separate aquatic centers on the same campus, calling it unprecedented and potentially costing millions in duplicated infrastructure. She requested a side-by-side cost comparison of integrating senior services into the Hawk facility versus new construction and asked for updated information on the \$6 million being pulled from the general budget to cover Hawk facility losses.

Pat Hansen criticized what she perceived as lack of focus on intergenerational programming and questioned the age demographics the facility would serve. She asked what dollar amount would make the Hawk location financially unfeasible compared to rebuilding at the Costick Center site. She expressed frustration with repeated listening sessions, arguing the community had already provided clear, consistent feedback favoring the Costick location.

Jim Etzin, a retired 29-year Farmington Hills Fire Department veteran, recommended dedicated road access and parking for older adults at any Hawk campus facility due to safety concerns from aggressive driving in current parking areas. He praised the commitment to a commercial kitchen, warning that outsourced Meals on Wheels programs in other communities do not match the quality and flexibility of the current program, calling it "arguably the most compassionate and beneficial service that this city offers its residents" after public safety.

Ron Godoth criticized the meeting's organization as lacking detail. He argued the committee should be more proactive with specific timelines and should not rely solely on architectural firms to drive the process. He suggested researching other communities' experiences with similar projects to learn from their successes and mistakes.

Sharon Godoth distinguished between "hearing" and "listening," noting that seniors had clearly expressed preference for remaining at the Costick Center location at the last meeting before the vote to evaluate the Hawk. She questioned whether comparison costs for rebuilding at the Costick Center had been completely dropped from consideration and expressed concern about further delays extending the project timeline.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Rich adjourned the meeting at 7:36pm, confirming the next meeting would be April 30th at City Hall at 6:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carly Lindahl, City Clerk